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Kieft-Wondergem, Dorine

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# Personal and Public Start Pages in a library setting



**Dorine Kieft-Wondergem**

Central Medical Library,  
University Medical Center Groningen,  
Groningen, the Netherlands.  
E-mail: d.c.h.wondergem@med.umcg.nl

### Abstract

*Personal and Public Start Pages are web-based resources. With these kind of tools it is possible to make your own free start page. A Start Page allows you to put all your web resources into one page, including blogs, email, podcasts, RSS-feeds. It is possible to share the content of the page with others. This makes it possible to develop pages both for specific departments and for use in instructions. This paper will give some examples for the use of Personal and of Public Start Pages in a library setting.*

*Key words:* library services; nurses' instruction; library, medical; internet.

### Introduction

During the European Conference of Medical and Health Libraries in Helsinki, Finland last year, I delivered a presentation with the title *How to use Web 2.0 technologies in your library instructions*. The presentation concentrated on Personal and Public Start Pages, what they are and how they can be used in a library setting (1). In this paper I will explain what Personal and Public Start Pages are and concentrate on the use of them in our library practice. In the months after the conference we have gained a lot more experience with these kinds of pages.

### Start Pages

The tools to make personalised Start Pages are available from the Web. With these free tools you can make your own personal start page and you can put all your web resources into one page. It is, for example, possible to add news, RSS-feeds, pod casts, pictures, video casts, search-engines, email, links to your favourite websites and blogs. Instead of opening all

those pages or tools one by one, you need only open one page and log on once.

Most providers of these resources offer the possibility to both share the content of a page with others and to make a Personal Start Page and a Public one. *Netvibes* (2), *Pageflakes* (3), *Live.com* (4), *iGoogle* (5), *My Yahoo* (6) are some of the providers of these services.

### Start Pages and libraries

The first step is to decide which provider you are going to use. You can have a look at the different sites and try out their possibilities with your goals in mind. My own library, the Central Medical Library (CMB) of the University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG), chose *Netvibes*. The main reason was, at that time, there existed in *Netvibes* the possibility of creating your own widgets, the possibility of making a Universe, and it was relatively easy to do it. These utilities continue to develop, so it may be that other providers can now offer the same.

### *Personal Start Pages*

A Personal Start Page can be created according to your own wishes. You can use it to keep up with your profession, your interests, and your hobbies by adding feeds and links on your own start page. You can add *You Tube*, *Flickr*, *Slideshare*, *Facebook*, and any other widgets you like (see <http://eco.netvibes.com>). You can check your email; add search boxes, and so on. The list of possibilities is almost unlimited.

A Personal Start Page can also be made for a patron individually, or for a department. When our library started to offer this kind of services to our patrons I made a Personal Page for a doctor of obstetrics and gynaecology. She gave me a list of the journals she needed to check regularly and a list of the databases she used on a regular base. In the first tab of her personal page the RSS-feeds to the journals she had listed were placed. The RSS-feeds were created via PubMed. The second tab was composed of search-engines modules for PubMed, UpToDate, Livetrix (a meta search-engine), QuickSearch CMB and the Catalogue of the University of Groningen. A Personal Start Page can only be viewed when the user is logged on. So the only people with access to her page were the doctor and me.

Since the doctor's Personal Start Page was made, some of her colleagues have become interested also. Together they agreed on a Public Start Page. I created a Public Page with a tab for common modules, and with a tab for each one of the doctors with RSS-feeds to the journals they wanted.

### *Public Start Pages*

A Public Start Page is open for anyone on the Internet to see. The editing of such a page is only possible for those who can log on. For creating a Public Page you need a personal account. With that account you can create one Personal Start Page and one Public Page. The content of these two pages can be different.

A library can make a Public Start Page for a department. An example is the page for the Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology (7). It contains a tab with some databases modules, a tab with RSS-feeds to journals they all wanted. Each participant has his/her own tab with RSS-feeds to the journals of their specific field of interest. The doctors saw no objections to the fact that a Public Start Page is visible to everyone. I think the fact that the page is publicly accessible should be made very clear to the patrons involved.

A library can also create a Universe where each department can have its own tab. For an example see [www.netvibes.com/cmb](http://www.netvibes.com/cmb). In here some departments have their own tab, e.g. the department of dermatology. They gave the CMB a top list of journals. The tables of content of these journals via PubMed RSS were put on the page, as well as of some other relevant journals, an overview of the library's collection of Dermatology and a search box.

Nowadays when our library holds a presentation at staff meetings about the services the library can provide for a department, we always mention the possibility of a *Netvibes* Page (personal or public). The reactions are usually very enthusiastic. To create a Start Page, whether it is personal or public, is not that much work. To keep it up to date is also very easy to do and is very important. One must examine the links, the RSS-feeds, to make sure they are still working. RSS-feeds via PubMed need special attention. One time, for one reason or another, the number of displayed items changed to one or two. This happened while nobody was logged on and I had done nothing. With other feeds this does not happen. The only way to switch back to the original number of items was to remove the feed completely and add it again. Trying to find a solution for this I looked for feeds for the same journals in the *Terkko Feed Navigator* (8) and found most of them there. To my big surprise the content of the feeds for the same journal was sometimes different. For some journals, e.g. *Human Reproduction*, the feed provided by PubMed contained more recent articles than the feed by Terkko. For other journals, e.g. *Fertility and Sterility* it was the other way around. Sometimes, but this was rare, the feed contained articles of the same date but they were different articles (from the same journal).

### *Public Start Pages and instruction*

A Public Start Page can also be created for a specific group. I developed EduCMB (9) for (trainee-)nurses. Since most medical databases are focused on medical information it is often difficult for our (trainee-)nurses to find the information they need. They are a relatively small part of our clientele and they often have difficulty finding their way to our library (figuratively). It is often also not easy for them to find the resources of nursing information via the website of our library. Therefore we had the idea to put all the information they could possibly need on one page.

Some time now has passed since the launching of *EduCMB*. In instructions to nurses we use this page as a

starting point. The reactions are still very enthusiastic, both from the nurses as from their teachers / supervisors. The supervisors sometimes give suggestions about resources to add to the page and we continue to be very pleased with their cooperation. Our library is now planning several demonstrations of *EduCMB* at different departments.

Another use of Start Pages in instruction is during workshops. A Public Page is a handy tool to put together tools you want to use during a workshop. For an example, visit [www.netvibes.com/Eahil2008](http://www.netvibes.com/Eahil2008). You can add the programme of the course, widgets you want to show, links needed during the course, and so on. It is also possible to let the participants make widgets or link-modules during the course, which can be added to the Public Page.

### Conclusions

Personal Start Pages and Public Start Pages, such as *Netvibes*, offer many opportunities for libraries. With their help librarians can easily keep up with their professional literature. They can show their patrons what the possibilities are and help them to create their own page. Libraries can set up a page for a department, with each of the staff-member having his or her own tab, or set up a tab for a department within a page for more departments. The choice between one or the other depends on the diversity of fields of interest of the staff-members. A Public Page creates the possibility to put together the search boxes, feeds, links and other utilities, that are useful for a particular target group. They can also be used as a starting point for any educational purposes.

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